United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Yosemite National Park
P. O. Box 577
Yosemite, California 95389

IN REPLY REFER TO:
D5039 (YOSE-FM)

MAY 0 1 2014

State of California
Regional Water Quality Control Board
Lonnie Wass
1685 E Street
Fresno, California 93706-2020

Dear Mr. Wass:

In September 2012, the National Park Service (NPS) submitted a Report of Waste Discharge in the required 180 days prior to the expiration of order R5-2008-0060. This order expired six months later on April 23, 2013. For the past year the NPS has been operating on an extended permit.

On March 19, 2014, Engineer in Training Alex Mushegan, emailed a copy of a proposed El Portal Wastewater Treatment Plant (EP WWTP) permit. He stated only identification of factual errors would be allowed and the Regional Water Quality Control Board has restricted the comment period for the NPS to the public comment period. The NPS comments are submitted below.

Under the findings section (page 3) of the permit, as it relates to the monitoring program, it states; "The burden, including costs of these reports shall bear reasonable relationship to the need for the report and the benefits to be obtained from the report". Merriam-Webster dictionary has three definitions for reasonable, 1) fair and sensible, 2) fairly or moderately good 3) not too expensive.

The NPS has spent a considerable amount of effort, resources and funding developing plans, implementing corrosion control, and acquiring the services of subject matter experts in order to address the Time Schedule Order for copper compliance during the last permit cycle. After completing a copper water effects ratio (WER) the NPS demonstrated the copper permit limits were set too low by the Board and the EP WWTP effluent is not a threat to aquatic life.

This is one example where the spirit and intent of reasonable is questioned, little to no accommodation was allowed. The NPS mission is highly compatible when it comes to clean water using reasonable applications. The following comments address new requirements that NPS considers distend the definition of reasonable. The NPS hopes the Board will fully consider these comments this permit cycle.

COPPER

Page E-4. Upon completion of the WER study the NPS has demonstrated the performance limits were set too low. The Board has adjusted the effluent limits based on this report, as such the NPS would ask for relief from monthly sampling and change sampling frequency to quarterly with the other required metals. The NPS has met the modified effluent limit.

TOTAL AMMONIA NITROGEN AS N

> *The addition of a discharge limit. Page F-69 This Order establishes new effluent limitations for ammonia (as N), nitrite plus nitrate (as N), and zinc.*
> *Page F-40 In addition, analysis of the effluent data shows that the MEC of 4.4 mg/L (as N) does not exceed either seasonal MDELs and the maximum reported effluent monthly average ammonia of 2.2 mg/L (as N) does not exceed either seasonal AMELs. The Central Valley Water Board concludes, therefore, that immediate compliance with these ammonia effluent limitations is feasible.*

Given that the Board has concluded that immediate compliance with ammonia effluent limitations are feasible and the NPS has met the proposed effluent objectives with the majority of samples being non-detect, the NPS proposes that the current collection of two samples per month not change to weekly. The NPS Laboratory does not process ammonia samples and must transport samples 240 miles per trip. This requires the lab analyst to be offsite two additional days a month making it more difficult to process the additional water and wastewater samples for the entire park. The NPS regards this an unnecessary burden without appreciable benefit.

Page F-50 outlines the method employed to calculate ammonia effluent concentration allowance limits using "C" *the priority pollutant criterion/objective*, and page H-1 provides the final calculations. It is unclear how ammonia level criteria was set when ammonia is not a listed priority pollutant.

NITRATE PLUS NITRITE AS N

> *Page F-16 The Merced River contains assimilative capacity for nitrite plus nitrate (as N) and a human health mixing zone for nitrite plus nitrate (as N) meets the mixing zone requirements of the Basin Plan. For nitrite plus nitrate (as N), the WQBEL based on a human health dilution credit of 48:1 is an AMEL of **477 mg/L (as N)**. However, the Facility can comply with an effluent limitation more stringent than with the full allowance of dilution.*

A previous response from the Board argued this effluent limit was required to avoid allocating an unnecessarily large portion of the receiving water assimilative capacity and possibly violate both state and federal antidegradation policies.
http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/board_decisions/tentative_orders/1307/8_wawona/9_wawona_rtc.pdf Page 3.

Assimilative capacity, and assimilative capacity allocation should not be confused with one another. The NPS has not violated or exceeded state or federal antidegradation policies nor does the NPS intend to reduce the level of treatment in conflict with BPTC. Based on the Boards assessment, an effluent limitation of 477 mg/L was calculated but an effluent limitation of 64 mg/L is proposed. The EP WWTP produces effluent lower than both limitations, assigning an effluent limitation over 700% lower than the calculated value at best is unreasonable at worst, is arbitrary and capricious. Since the effluent value cannot violate or exceed the calculated value the NPS proposes this limitation not be added to the proposed permit and removed in its entirety or be set at the calculated values of 477 mg/L.

SALINITY EVALUATION AND MINIMIZATION PLAN
Page 15 & F-32. Since using a PAC coagulant for the last year the EP WWTP effluent is consistently lower than the 900 umhos/cm limit for Salinity Water Quality Criteria/ Objectives.
Based on last years sampling of conductivity the treatment process adds an average of 117 umhos/cm during the treatment process. The EP WWTP is on the far eastern edge of the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board region. The issue of salinity is mainly a Central Valley issue. The NPS proposes that this plan mandate be removed from the proposed permit.

INFLUENT ELECTRICAL CONDUCTIVITY

> *Page E-4 footnote 2 "Grab samples shall <u>not</u> be collected at the same time each day to get a complete representation of variations in the influent."*

The capacity built into the collection system in terms of volume homogenize the sewage to provide representative sampling, because of this, the footnote to vary grab samples contributes no value but rather adds another unnecessary conditional requirement that complicates operations and sampling.

24 HOUR COMPOSITE SAMPLING

Page E-3 through E-6. Changing the permit from a 12-hour to a 24-hour composite sample.

> Page E-3 monitoring location INF-001 states, *"A location where a representative sample of the influent into the Facility can be collected prior to any plant return flows or treatment processes."*

This requirement is technically unachievable without major reconstruction. The EP WWTP was designed and constructed to return backwash flows upstream of the plant influent systems. Currently backwashes are completed in the 12-hour period prior to starting the 12-hour composite sampler. The NPS considers it infeasible to discontinue backwashing tertiary filters for 24-hours while operations wait for a composite sampler to complete. While plant rehabilitation is planned for the future, it will not occur during this permit cycle.

INFLUENT BOD

> Page E-4 footnote 3 *"The Discharger shall conduct 24-hour time proportional composite sampling until 31 December 2015. Starting 1 January 2016 the Discharger shall conduct 24-hour flow proportional composite sampling."*

Implementation of this requirement in conjunction with the 24-hour composite sampling change would require the NPS to move or realign the main sewer trunk and a backwash line and redesign and construct the plant headworks. These changes would be dependent upon allocation and priority of federal funding and can not be completed in the 18 month time line proposed.

FACTUAL AND OTHER ERRORS

Page F-5, F-6 Corrections to inaccuracies in the RWQCB inspection report of March 25, 2010 were sent to the Board in a letter dated, December 10, 2010. However, the findings have not been corrected which inaccurately reflect the condition of the facility and render portions of the report erroneous. Further Board actions based on the errors would result in unnecessary and unreasonable requirements.

> *b. The ultraviolet light system transmittance meter was not functioning at the time of the inspection.*
> This observation would lead the reader to assume the UV disinfection system was inoperable during the inspection. Shortly after the inspection the transmittance meter was returned from the manufacturer. A failure in the UV transmittance meter only affects power consumption not effluent quality. A meter failure will default to running all lights at 100%. An additional meter has been purchased as a spare. There was no deficiency in disinfection as a result.

c. *Housekeeping in the lime storage area needs improvement*
It was noted during the inspection that the lime day tank and floor were white due to lime. This is not a house keeping issue but rather 40 years of use. Although the area is routinely cleaned and washed. 40 years of lime use has stained the concrete but creates no hazard. The lime is in the designed and approved area of the plant chemical mixing room.

d. *Concrete around one of the primary clarifiers cracked and broke off, which rendered the clarifier inoperable.*
A small piece of concrete has broken free from the exterior of the primary clarifier in the galley. This cosmetic damage does not make the clarifier inoperable as described.

Page F-47 *In addition, the Discharger uses aluminum sulfate in the treatment system to remove phosphorus.* Polyaluminium chloride is used for phosphorous removal not aluminum sulfate.

Lastly the requirement to publish in a paper, the Notice of Public Hearing, is an expensive and minimally effective method of communication, limited to readers of the legal section of the local paper. The NPS hosts a website that is readily accessible to the public on a global basis. The use of internet based electronic media is a more cost effective method and reaches an audience specifically interested in issues related to Yosemite or the discharge permit holder. Remove the requirement to post in paper media and allow electronic media as the approved method of communication.

If you have any questions regarding these comments, please contact Utilities Manager, Paul Laymon at (209) 379-1077.

Sincerely,

Don L. Neubacher
Superintendent

cc: Pamela C. Creedon